



Public Ownership

by

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Public Ownership

Public Ownership in Canada to-day stands tried, tested and accepted.

Who were the pioneers in its advocacy? The workers.

What political party is the strongest advocate of Public Ownership? The Labor Party.

Labor demands the common ownership of Railroads and Express, Steamships, Mines, Forests, Fisheries, Factories, Telegraph and Telephone Services, Water and Lighting Plants, Cold Storage Plants and Stores. Labor is not contented with the present limited application of the principle of Public Ownership. It should be extended to the limit of its usefulness, till private monopoly, graft and extortion are nigh impossible, and all who work receive the full product of their labor. But while Labor believes in the Public Ownership of many things, it stands for the private ownership, in accordance with the value of one's labor, of all wealth such as Houses, Furniture, Books, Pictures, Clothing, and distinctly personal effects.

Labor's attitude may here be defined in a few sentences:

- 1. Labor stands for the Public Ownership of Capital.**

2. Labor stands for the Private Ownership of Wealth, as defined above.
3. Labor stands for the Public Ownership of Opportunity.
4. Labor stands for the Private Ownership of the product of one's labor.
5. Labor stands for the Public Ownership of the means of life.
6. Labor stands for the Private Ownership of life itself.

Labor desires that its policies be thoroughly understood. Education should be the first step towards securing legislative action, and the mass of voters should be convinced that the contemplated action is wise and desirable. As a result of an extensive educational campaign, carried on by Labor against the high cost of living, the Federal Government appointed a Commission to make an enquiry into the cause of the H. C. of L., and their report in 1915 declared the root of the trouble to be:

- (1) Private Ownership.
- (2) Cold Storage.*
- (3) Land Speculation.
- (4) War and Militarism.

Beyond reporting the above causes nothing was done. But the report said in support of Public Ownership: "Generally

*Editor's note.—The Board of Inquiry into Cost of Living, Vol. II., page 1068.

speaking, the reduction of electric light charges has accompanied the growth of Public Ownership." (Page 317.)

Then follows a reference to the Hydro-Electric Commission of Ontario, which says: "In spite of the current tendencies the price of electric lighting has gone down almost one-half following the municipalization of plants and the operation by the Hydro-Electric Commission of Ontario—a result which forced down the price of illuminating gas." (P. 1069.)

The municipal electric light and power plant of Winnipeg saved the people of that city over \$2,000,000 between 1911 and 1917. These figures are based on estimates made by Mr. J. C. Glasco, the manager of the plant. The domestic lighting rate, before the municipal plant was established in 1906, was 20 cents a kilowatt hour. In 1907 it was brought down to 10 cents per k.w.h., and in 1911 to 7½ cents per k.w.h. The municipal plant was selling light by 1917 at 3 1/3 cents per k.w.h.

In St. Boniface, Man., in 1900, a privately owned plant charged the people 20 cents per k.w.h., with a discount of 10 to 15 per cent.; but in October, 1911, a municipal (electric) plant was installed, with the result that by 1913 it charged 20 cents, with 35 per cent. discount. If the Public Ownership of electric power brings down the price, what will it do if applied to other necessities of life?

In Australia, where Public Ownership sentiment is stronger than in any other place in the world, the cost of living is much lower. The following article, published on March 7th, 1919, in The Industrial Banner, shows what has been accomplished by the power of labor, in Australia:—

“Labor has made great progress in Australia since the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901. At present two Labor Governments are in office, one in New South Wales and the other in Queensland. These Labor Governments own and control all the railways, street cars, hotels and refreshment rooms in connection therewith, and they also operate State-owned ships, coal mines, iron mines, iron and steel works, woollen and clothing factories, harness and leather factories, boot factories, steam trawlers, fish shops, meat stores, timber mills, brick works, lime works, quarries, farms, and hospitals. In the latter people are treated free of charge, but without the taint of charity.

“The New South Wales Labor Government has nationalized many things, including the coal industry. The State coal is supplied at \$5.00 per ton, and the miners get \$4.50 a day for a ‘bank to bank’ shift of eight hours (with half an hour for dinner). There were strikes in privately owned mines when this became known to the workers. The outcome was that the

mines were conscripted in January, 1918, and the result was \$2,000,000 a year clear profit for the State—not for private individuals. A four-pound loaf is supplied by State bakeries for 12 cents, and the State bakeries pay 15 per cent. more wages than privately-owned bakeries. Even the best butter is sold at 25 cents a pound, and cheese at 16 cents. Compare these with Toronto prices in December, 1918:

	Australia, State- owned	Canada, Private- owned
4-lb. loaf.....	12c	29c
Butter	25c	58c
Cheese	16c	32c
Honey	10c	40c
Tea	25c	60c
Meat	13c	28c
Mutton	11c	30c
Sugar	6c	12c
Salmon	6c	25c
Coal (ton)	\$5.00	\$11.75

Took Over Sugar Refineries and Reduced the Price.

“In Queensland, where also they believe that ‘Labor representation is the most powerful weapon the workers can use against the arrogance of the capitalists,’ they passed an Act taking over the sugar refineries and reduced the price of sugar from 12 to 6 cents a pound. The Government conscripted (without compensation) over nine million acres of land from

the big land owners, and intends to take 200 million acres at the same price. By the Public Ownership of the butcher stores, the price of meat was reduced from 28 cents to 13 cents per lb. An Act was passed which gave every widow, regardless of age, a pension of \$4.00 per week, and every orphan child \$2.00 to \$2.50 per week.

"The wages are 75 per cent. higher than in Canada, and the hours of labor are 44 per week.

Controlled by Labor.

"For a number of years the legislative and administrative machinery in the Federal House was controlled by Labor. In fact, until 1916, the Labor Party had 42 out of 75 seats in the House of Representatives, and 23 out of 36 in the Senate. A glance at the splendid work performed during that period (the liberalizing of old age and invalid pensions; the maternity grant, which allows \$25 to each mother upon the birth of a child; the formation of a Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration; the granting of penny post; the construction of the transcontinental railway; and the nationalization of the banks) will show what can be accomplished by the workers through political action. There we find, Australia, under the British flag, able to boast that in no other country in the world do better conditions prevail for the workers."

The National Health.

The general working conditions in a country soon have their counterpart in the health of the people. Public Ownership Australia has a much higher health standard than other countries where private ownership still holds sway. Look at this table. It shows the death rate per thousand in various parts of the world:—

Queensland	9.63
New South Wales.....	9.61
Western Australia	8.97
New Zealand	9.58
South Australia	10.10
Victoria	10.36
Tasmania	8.89
England and Wales.....	14.4
Canada	12.0
Scotland	14.6
Ireland	16.5
German Empire.....	15.0
France	17.7
Austria	20.5
Italy	17.9
Spain	22.1
Hungary	23.3
Russia (European)	28.9

The Independent Labor Party, being desirous of having this country peopled with healthy and vigorous men and women, has included in its platform, Public Ownership.

What has been done in Australia can be done in Canada. Let us follow their

example, abolish unemployment, give the workers the full social value of their toil, abolish poverty, hunger, want and degradation, and make the people prosperous and happy. Support the Labor Party in its efforts to extend Public Ownership to the limits of its possibilities.

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*Pass this on where it will do the
most good.*



